

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

The documented increasing rate of sea-level rise and the possibility of increased intensity of tropical storms are threats to our coastal economy that we must not ignore. Adaptation to the ever-changing coastal environment is the key. Our vision for the future of coastal North Carolina, based on an understanding of the origin and evolution of the barrier island-estuarine system, is preliminary and unrefined. Future actions such as those outlined above could lead to a renaissance that has more potential pay-offs than our current approach to coastal management can provide in a changing climatic regime.

If we so determine, we can protect the natural resources of the barrier islands, preserve the historical and cultural heritage of coastal and mainland villages, and avert a head-on collision of an increasing population with the natural processes of a migrating shoreline. The climate is changing, sea level is rising. We must adapt to these changes if we hope to maintain a viable coastal economy and to preserve the natural resources upon which that economy is based.

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